

CLAIMS

1. A method of heating a product, where the product comprises a constituent contained within an outer wrapper, the method comprising the step of injecting a hot vapour into the constituent within the outer wrapper to heat the product.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, where the product to be heated is a food product which comprises foodstuff contained within an outer wrapper.
3. A method as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the outer wrapper is of packaging material.
4. A method as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the outer wrapper is edible and part of the food product itself.
5. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the product is a food product, and the hot vapour injected into the food product is steam.
6. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising the steps of activating a hot vapour generator to generate the hot vapour, putting a hot vapour outlet of the hot vapour generator into communication with the constituent within the outer wrapper to heat the product, and removing the communication between the hot vapour generator and the constituent.
7. A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the hot vapour generator is arranged substantially adjacent to the product, and a hot vapour outlet tube is extended within the constituent within the outer wrapper of the product such that the hot vapour generated may heat the constituent.
8. A method as claimed in Claim 6 or Claim 7, wherein the outlet of the hot vapour generator is, or incorporates, extendible means to enhance the communication of the hot vapour outlet with the constituent of the product.
9. Apparatus for heating a product, where the product comprises a constituent contained within an outer wrapper, the apparatus comprising a

support for the product, a hot vapour generator, and a hot vapour outlet insertable within a product provided on said support.

- 5 10. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the support is provided by at least part of the hot vapour generator.
- 10 11. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 9 or Claim 10, wherein the hot vapour generator is a steam generator.
- 15 12. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 9 to 11, wherein the hot vapour generator is arranged substantially adjacent to the product, and a hot vapour outlet tube is extended within the constituent within the outer wrapper such that the hot vapour generated heats the constituent.
- 20 13. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 12, wherein the communication between the product constituent and the hot vapour generator is arranged to be removed after heating.
- 25 14. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 9 to 13, wherein the outlet of the hot vapour generator is, or incorporates, extendible means to enhance the communication of the hot vapour outlet with the constituent within the outer wrapper.
- 30 15. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the extendible means is arranged to be extended by the pressure of the hot vapour generated.
- 35 16. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 15, wherein the extendible means comprises a bellows or has a telescopic structure.
- 40 17. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 9 to 16, wherein said hot vapour outlet has a nozzle to impart a high velocity to the hot vapour to be delivered.
- 45 18. A method of heating the contents of a container, said method comprising the steps of activating a hot vapour generator to generate a hot vapour, putting a hot vapour outlet of the hot vapour generator into communication with the contents of a container to thereby heat the contents,

and removing the communication between the hot vapour generator and the container contents.

5 19. A method as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the hot vapour generator is a steam generator.

10 20. A method as claimed in Claim 18 or Claim 19, wherein the hot vapour generator is arranged substantially adjacent to an open container, and a hot vapour outlet tube is extended within the contents in the opened container such that the hot vapour generated may heat those contents.

15 21. A method as claimed in Claim 18 or Claim 19, wherein the hot vapour generator is coupled to the container such that its outlet is in, or can be brought into communication with, the contents of the container.

22. A method as claimed in Claim 21, wherein the hot vapour generator is incorporated in, or forms, a closure for the container.

20 23. A method as claimed in any of Claims 18 to 22, wherein the outlet of the hot vapour generator is, or incorporates, extendible means to enhance the communication of the hot vapour outlet with the contents of the container.

25 24. A method as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the extendible means is arranged to be extended by the pressure of the hot vapour generated.

25 25. Apparatus for heating the contents of a container, said apparatus comprising a container, and a hot vapour generator arranged to generate a hot vapour, said hot vapour generator having a hot vapour outlet arranged to be put into communication with the contents of the container to thereby heat the contents, wherein the communication between the hot vapour generator and the container contents is removable.

26. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 25, wherein the hot vapour generator is a steam generator.

35 27. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 25 or Claim 26, wherein the hot vapour

generator is arranged substantially adjacent to an open container, and a hot vapour outlet tube is extended within the contents in the opened container such that the hot vapour generated may heat those contents.

- 5 28. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 27, wherein the communication between the container with its heated contents and the hot vapour generator is arranged to be removed after heating.
- 10 29. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 25 or Claim 26, wherein the hot vapour generator is coupled to the container such that its outlet is in, or can be brought into communication with, the contents of the container.
- 15 30. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 29, wherein the hot vapour generator is incorporated in, or forms a closure for the container.
- 20 31. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 25 to 29, wherein the outlet of the hot vapour generator is, or incorporates, extendible means to enhance the communication of the hot vapour outlet with the contents of the container.
- 25 32. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the extendible means is arranged to be extended by the pressure of the hot vapour generated.
- 30 33. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 32, wherein the extendible means comprises a bellows or a telescopic structure.
- 35 34. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 25 to 33, wherein the hot vapour outlet has a nozzle to impart a high velocity to the hot vapour to be delivered.
- 40 35. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 25 to 34, wherein the hot vapour outlet extends through a wall of the container.
- 45 36. A hot vapour generator comprising a closed casing separated into first and second containers by an internal wall, a respective one of first and second reagents, which react together to generate a hot vapour, being contained within each of said first and second containers, and operating means to cause breakage or removal of said internal wall whereby said first and second

reagents are mixed and generate said hot vapour, said hot vapour generator further comprising an elongate hollow tube having a first end in communication with the interior of said casing whereby the hot vapour generated is delivered to a second outlet end of said elongate hollow tube.

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37. A hot vapour generator as claimed in Claim 36 arranged to generate steam, and wherein the first and second reagents are, or include, water and quicklime.

10 38. A hot vapour generator as claimed in Claim 36 or Claim 37, wherein the elongate hollow tube is a flexible tube which can be positioned so that its outlet end can be immersed in the contents of the container.

15 39. A hot vapour generator as claimed in Claim 36 or Claim 37, wherein the elongate hollow tube is extendible by way of the pressure of the hot vapour generated.

20 40. A hot vapour generator as claimed in Claim 39, wherein the elongate hollow tube comprises an extendible bellows or has an extendible telescopic structure.

25 41. A hot vapour generator as claimed in any of Claims 36 to 40, wherein a nozzle to increase the pressure of the hot vapour output is provided on the outlet end of the elongate hollow tube.

42. A hot vapour generator as claimed in any of Claims 36 to 41, where the hot vapour generator is incorporated within a module which is removably coupled to a container such that the outlet end of the elongate hollow tube is put into communication with the contents of the container by the generation of the hot vapour.

30 43. A hot vapour generator as claimed in Claim 42, wherein the hot vapour generator is incorporated in a closure for a container.